Vol. 3, No. 4
July 24, 1916

Every Week

$1.00 per Year
3 Cents a Copy

"She loved light, laughter, wine, song. Her passion for admiration and excitement became a madness. . . .

. . . One day—by accident—he discovered that she had been carrying on an affair with another man."

The Girl Beyond the Trail

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

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IF you had stood there on the edge of the black spruce forest, with the wind moaning dismally through the twisting trees—midnight of deep December—the Transcontinental would have looked like a thing of fire, with that band of illumination which cut it in twain from the first coach to the last, leaving a space like an inky hyphen where the baggage-car lay. Out of the north came armies of snow-laden clouds that scudded just above the earth, and with these clouds came now and then a shrieking mockery of wind to taunt this stricken creation of man and the creatures it sheltered—soon and women who had begun to shiver, and whose white faces stared with increasing anxiety out into the mysterious darkness.

For three hours those faces had peered into the night. Many of the prisoners in the snow-bound coaches had enjoyed the experience at first. There had been warmth and light, men's laughter, women's voices, and children's play. But the loudest jester among the men was now silent, huddled deep in his great-coat, and the young woman who had clapped her hands in silly ecstasy when it was announced that the train was snow-bound, was weeping and shivering by turns.

It was cold—so cold that the snow which came sweeping and swirling with the wind was like granite-dust; it clicked, clicked, clicked against the glass—a bombardment of infinitesimal projectiles fighting to break in.

At the edge of the forest it was probably forty degrees below zero. Within the coaches there still remained some warmth. The burning lamps radiated it, and the presence of many people added to it. But it was cold, and growing colder.

For the twentieth time, a passing trainman was asked the same question.

"The good Lord only knows," he growled down into the face of a young woman whose prettiness would have enticed the most chivalrous attention from him earlier in the evening. "Engine and tender been gone three hours, and the divisional point only twenty miles up the line. Should have been back with help long ago. Hell, ain't it?"

He paused at the smoking compartment, thrust in his head for a moment, passed on, and slammed the door after him as he went into the next coach.

IN that smoking compartment were two men, facing each other across the narrow space between the two seats. They had not looked up when the trainman thrust in his head. They seemed, as one leaned over toward the other, wholly oblivious of the storm.

It was the older man who bent forward. He was about fifty. The hand that rested for a moment on David Raine's knee was red and knotted. It was the hand of a man who had lived his life in struggling with the wilderness. His face was colored and toughened by wind and blizzard and hot northern sun, with eyes cobwebbed about by a myriad of fine lines. He was not a large man. He was shorter than David Raine. There was a slight droop to his shoulders. Yet about him there was a strength, a suppressed energy, an eagerness for life, which the other and younger man did not possess. Throughout many thousands of square miles of the great northern wilderness this older man was known as Father Roland, the missioner.

His companion was not more than thirty-eight. Perhaps he was a year or two younger. His eyes were a clear and steady gray as they met Father Roland's. They were eyes that one could not easily forget. Except for his eyes, he was like a man who had been sick, and was still sick. The missioner had made his own guess. And now, with his hand on the other's knee, he said:

"And you say—that you are afraid—for this friend of yours?"

David Raine nodded his head. Lines deepened a little about his mouth.

"Yes, I am afraid." For a moment he turned to the night, while a fierce volley beat against the window. Then he faced Father Roland again.

"Did you ever hear of a man losing himself?" he asked. "I don't mean in the woods, or in a desert, or by going mad. I mean in that other way—heart, body, soul—losing one's grip."

"Yes. Many years ago—I knew of a man who lost himself in that way," replied the missioner, straightening in his seat. "But he found himself again. And this friend of yours? I am interested. If you are betraying nothing, would you mind telling me his story?"

"It is not a pleasant story," warned the younger man. "And on such a night as this—"

"—it may be that one can see more clearly into the depths of misfortune and tragedy," interrupted the missioner quietly.

A faint flush rose into David Raine's pale face.

"Of course—there was a woman," he said.

"Yes—of course: a woman."

"Sometimes I haven't been quite sure whether this man worshiped the woman or the woman's beauty," David went on. "This woman—my friend's wife—was so beautiful that even the eyes of other women were fascinated by her.

"MY friend was a tremendous student. His fortune was sufficient to give him both time and means for the pursuits he loved. He had his great library, and adjoining it a laboratory. He wrote books which few people read because they were filled with such odd theories. He believed that the world was very old, and that there was less profit for man in discovering new luxuries for an artificial civilization than in re-discovering a few of the great laws and miracles buried in the dust of the past. His theory was that the patriarchs of old held a closer touch on the pulse of life than progress in its present forms will ever bring to us. He was not a fanatic. He was young, and filled with enthusiasm. He loved children. He wanted to fill his home with them. But his wife knew that she was too beautiful for that—and they had none."

He leaned a little forward, and pulled his hat a trifle over his eyes.

"My friend's wife loved light, laughter, wine, song, excitement. He loved his books, his work, and his home. Her

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passion for admiration and excitement became a madness. Their ways grew farther and farther apart. One day—by accident—he discovered that his wife had for a long time been carrying on an affair with another man. When he confronted her with the shameful truth, she laughed. Yes, she laughed—a mad sort of laugh, a laughter of fear perhaps, but—*laughter*. He did not kill her. Her laughter saved her. He left her and went out into the night."

There was a terrible silence. The ticking of Father Roland's big silver watch seemed like the tiny beating of a drum.

"What happened then, David?"

"My friend never saw the woman—his wife—again. He went away. That was a year ago. In that year I know that he has fought desperately to bring himself back into his old health of mind and body, and I am quite sure that he has failed."

DAVID rose to his feet. He was perhaps five feet ten inches in height, which was four inches taller than the little missioner. His shoulders were of a good breadth, his waist and hips of an athletic slimness. But his clothes hung with a certain looseness, his hands were too thin, and in his face hovered the shadows of sickness and of mental suffering.

Father Roland stood beside him now with eyes that shone with a deep understanding. In the sputter of the lamp above their heads the two men clasped hands, and the little missioner's grip was like the grip of iron.

"David, I've preached a strange code through the wilderness for many a long year," he said, and his voice was vibrant with a strong emotion. "I'm not Catholic, and I'm not Church of England. I've got no religion that wears a name. I'm simply Father Roland. And all these years I've helped to bury the dead in the forests, an' nurse the sick, an' marry the living; an' it may be that I've learned one thing better than most of you who live down in civilization—and that's how to find yourself when you're down and out. Boy, will you come with me?"

Their eyes met. A fiercer gust of the storm beat against the window.

"It was your story that you told me," said Father Roland, his voice barely above a whisper. "It was your story, David?"

"Yes, it was my story, Father."

"And she—was your wife?"

"Yes; she was my wife."

Suddenly David fried his hand from the little missioner's clasp. He had stopped something that was almost a cry on his lips. He pulled his hat still lower over his eyes, and went through the door out into the main part of the coach.

Father Roland did not follow. Some of the ruddiness had gone from his cheeks, and as he stood facing the door through which David had disappeared a smoldering fire began to burn far back in his eyes. After a few moments this fire died out, and his face was gray and haggard as he sat down again in his corner.

HALF a dozen times that night, David had walked from end to end of the five snow-bound coaches that made up the Transcontinental. He believed that for him it was an act of providence that had delayed the train. Otherwise a sleeping-car would have been picked up at the next divisional point, and he would not have unburdened himself to Father Roland. They would not have sat up until that late hour in the smoking compartment, and this strange little forest missioner would not have told him the story of a lonely cabin up on the edge of the Barrens—a story of strange pathos and human tragedy that had, in some mysterious way, unsealed his own lips.

He had kept to himself the shame and heart-break of his own affliction since the day he had been compelled to tell it, coldly and without visible emotion, to gain his freedom. He had meant to keep it to himself always. And of a sudden it had all come out. He was not sorry. He was glad. He was amazed at the change in himself. That day had been a terrible day for him. He could not get her out of his mind. Now a depressing hand seemed to have lifted itself from his heart.

In the third coach, David sat down in an empty seat. What had the little missioner meant when he had said, "I've learned one thing better than most of you who live down in civilization. And that's how to find yourself when you're down and out"? And what had he meant when he added, "Will you come with me?" Go with him? Where?

There came a sudden crash of the storm against the window, a shrieking blast of wind and snow, and David stared out into the black night.

Was that what Father Roland had meant? Had he asked him to go with him into *that*?

His face touched the cold glass. He stared harder. That morning Father Roland had boarded the train at a wilderness station and had taken a seat beside him. They had become acquainted. And later the little missioner had told him how those vast forests reached without a break for hundreds of miles into the mysterious north. He loved them, even as they lay cold and white outside the windows. There was gladness in his voice when he said that he was going back into them. They were a part of *his* world—a world of "mystery and savage glory," he had called it, stretching for a thousand miles to the edge of the Arctic, and fifteen hundred from Hudson's Bay to the western mountains. And to-night he had said, "Will you come with me?"

David's pulse quickened. He had always been more or less pusillanimous in the face of winter. He disliked cold. He hated snow. But this that shrieked at him outside the window had set something stirring strangely within him.

SUDDENLY he laughed—a chuckling, half broken, and out-of-tune sort of laugh. It was the first time in a year that he had so forgotten himself; and in the sudden and inexplicable spontaneity of it he was startled. He turned quickly and looked across the aisle, and his eyes met squarely the eyes of a woman.

He saw nothing but the eyes at first. They were big, dark, questing eyes—eyes that had in them a hunting look, as if in his face they hoped to find the answer to a question. Then the face added itself to the eyes. It was not a young face; the woman was past forty. But this age did not impress itself over a strange and appealing beauty in her countenance which was like the beauty of a flower whose petals were falling. Before David had seen more than this, she turned her eyes from him slowly and doubtfully, as if not quite convinced that she had found what she sought, and faced the darkness beyond her own side of the car.

David was puzzled, and he looked at her with still deeper interest. Her hood had slipped down, and hung by its long scarf about her shoulders. She leaned toward the window, and as she stared out her chin rested in the cup of her hand. He noticed that her hand was thin, and that there was a shadowy hollow in the white pallor of her cheek. Her hair was heavy, and arranged in thick coils that glowed dully in the lamplight. It was a deep brown, almost black, shot through with little silvery threads of gray.

For a few moments David withdrew his gaze, subconsciously ashamed of the directness of his scrutiny. But after a little his eyes drifted back to her. Her head had sunk forward a little, and he fancied that a little shiver ran through her.

He felt an impulse to speak to her, to ask her if he could in any way add to her comfort. But, if she was in distress, it was not a physical distress. She was neither hungry nor cold; for there was a basket at her side in which he had a glimpse of broken bits of food, and at her back, draped over the seat, was a heavy beaver-skin coat.

He rose to his feet with the intention of returning to the smoking compartment in which he had left Father Roland. His movement seemed to rouse the woman. Again her dark eyes met his own. They looked straight up at him as he stood in the aisle, and he stopped. Her lips trembled.

"Are you—acquainted—between here and Lac Seul?" she asked.

Her voice had in it the same haunting mystery that he had seen in her eyes—the same apprehension, the same hope, as if some curious and indefinable instinct were telling her that in this stranger she was very near the thing that she was seeking.

"I am a stranger," he said. "This is the first time I have ever been in this country."

She sank back, the look of hope in her face dying out like a passing flash.

"I thank you," she murmured. "I thought—perhaps—you might know of a man whom I am seeking—a man of the name of Michael O'Donnor."

She did not expect him to speak again. She drew her heavy coat about her and turned her face again toward the window. There was nothing that he could say, nothing that he could do; and he went back to Father Roland.

HE was in the last coach when a sound came to him faintly. It was too sharp for the wailing of the storm. Others heard it and grew suddenly erect, with tense and listening faces.

It came again.

The heavy-jowled man who had taken the adventure as a jest at first, and who had rolled himself in his great-coat like a hibernating woodchuck, unloosed his voice in a rumble of joy.

"It's the whistle!" he announced. "It's coming at last!"

David came up quietly to the door of the smoking compartment where he had left Father Roland. The little missioner was huddled in his corner near the window. His head hung heavily forward, and the shadow of his black hat concealed his face. He was apparently asleep. David drew away from the door on the tips of his toes, and reëntered the coach.

He did not stop in the first or the second cars, though there were plenty of empty seats, and people were rousing themselves into more cheerful activity. He passed through one and then the other to the third coach, and sat down when he came to the seat he had occupied. He did not look at the woman across the aisle immediately. He did not want her to suspect that he had come back for that purpose. When his eyes did seek her in a casual sort of way, he was disappointed.

She was almost lost in her coat. He caught only the gleam of her thick, dark hair, and the shape of one slim hand, white as paper in the lamp-glow. He knew that she was not asleep, for he saw her shoulders move, and the hand shifted its position to hold the coat more closely about her. The whistling of the approaching engines had no apparent effect on her.

For ten minutes he sat staring at all he could see of her—the dark glow of her hair and that one ghostly white hand. He moved, he shuffled his feet, he coughed—he made sure that she knew he was there; but she did not look up. He was sorry that he had not brought Father Roland with him in the first place, for he was certain that if the little missioner had seen the grief and the despair in her eyes—the hope almost burned out—he would have gone to her and said things that he himself had found it impossible to say when the opportunity came to him. He rose again from his seat as the powerful snow-engine and its consort coupled to the train. The shock almost flung him off his feet. Even then, she did not raise her head.

A second time he returned to the smoking compartment.

Father Roland was no longer huddled in his corner. He was on his feet, his hands thrust deep down into his trousers pockets, and he was whistling softly as David came in. His hat lay on the seat. It was the first time David had seen his round, rugged, weather-reddened face without the big hat. He looked younger, and yet older. His face had something in the ruddy glow and deeply lined strength of it that was almost youthful. But his thick, shaggy hair was very gray. The train had begun to move.

"We are under way," he said. "Very soon I shall be getting off."

David sat down.

"It is some distance beyond the divisional point ahead—this cabin where you get off?" he asked.

"Yes; twenty or twenty-five miles. There is nothing but a cabin and two or three log outbuildings there—where Thoreau, the Frenchman, has his fox-pens, as I told you. It is not a regular stop, but the train will slow down to throw off my baggage and give me an easy jump. My dogs and Indian are with Thoreau."

"And from there—from Thoreau's—it is a long distance to the place you call home?"

The little missioner rubbed his hands in a queer rasping way. The movement of those rugged hands and the curious chuckling laugh that accompanied it radiated a sort of cheer. They were expressive of more than satisfaction.

"It's a great many miles to my own cabin, but it's home—all home—after I get into the forests. My cabin is at the lower end of God's Lake, three hundred miles by dogs and sledge from Thoreau's—three hundred miles as straight north as a *niskuk* flies."

"A *niskuk*!" said David.

"Yes—a gray goose."

"Don't you have crows?"

"A few, but they're as crooked in flight as they are in morals. They're scavengers, and they hang down pretty close to the line of rail—close to civilization, where there's a lot of scavenging to be done, you know."

For the second time that night, David found a laugh on his lips.

"Then—you don't like civilization?"

"My heart is in the northland," replied Father Roland; and David saw a sudden change in the other's face, a dying out of the light in his eyes, a tenseness that came and went at the corners of his mouth.

ONE of his hands dropped on David's shoulder, and Father Roland became the questioner.

"You have been thinking, since you left me a little while ago?" he asked.

"Yes. I came back; but you were asleep."

"I haven't been asleep. I have been awake every minute. I thought once that I heard a movement at the door, but when I looked up there was no one there. You told me to-day that you were going west—to the British Columbia mountains?"

David nodded. Father Roland sat down beside him.

"Of course you didn't tell me why you were going," he went on. "I have made my own guess since you told me about the woman, David. Probably you will never know just why your story has struck so deeply home with me, and why it has seemed to make you more a son to me than a stranger. I have guessed that in going west you are simply wandering. You are fighting to run away from something. Isn't that it? You are running away—trying to escape the one thing in the whole wide world that you can not lose by flight—and that's memory. You can *think* just as hard in Japan or the South Sea Islands as you can on Fifth Avenue in New York; and sometimes the farther away you get the more maddening your thoughts become. It isn't travel you want, David. It's blood—*red* blood. And for putting blood into you, and courage, and the joy of just living and breathing, there's nothing on the face of the earth like—*that!*"

He reached an arm past David and pointed to the night beyond the window.

"You mean the storm, and the snow—"

"Yes; storm, and snow, and sunshine, and forests—the tops of thousands of miles of our northland that you've only seen the edge of. That's what I mean. But, first of all,"—and again the little missioner rubbed his hands in his curious rasping way,—"first of all, I'm thinking of the supper that's waiting for us at Thoreau's. Will you get off and have supper with me at the Frenchman's, David? After that, if you decide not to go up to God's Lake with me, Thoreau can bring you and your luggage back to

"Thoreau did not introduce his wild-flower wife; in his understanding of things, an introduction was unnecessary."

the station with his dog-team. Such a supper—or breakfast—it will be! I can smell it now, for I know Thoreau—his fish, his birds, the tenderest steaks in the forests! I can hear Thoreau cursing because the train hasn't come, and I'll wager he's got fish and caribou tenderloin and partridges just ready for a final turn in the roaster. What do you say? Will you get off with me?"

"It is a tempting offer to a hungry man, Father."

The little missioner chuckled elatedly.

"Hunger! That's the real medicine of the gods, David, when the belt isn't drawn too tight."

His face radiated such anticipation that David unconsciously felt the spirit of his enthusiasm. He had gripped one of Father Roland's hands and was pumping it up and down almost before he realized what he was doing.

"I'll get off with you at Thoreau's!" he exclaimed. "And later—if I feel as I do now, and you still want my company—I'll go on with you into the north country!"

A slight flush rose into his thin cheeks, and his eyes shone with a freshly kindled enthusiasm. As Father Roland saw the change in him, his two knotted hands closed over David's.

"I do want your company, David," he said. "I want it as I never wanted the company of another man!"

"Why?" David demanded. "Why don't you ask some man with red blood in his veins and a heart that hasn't been burned out? Why have you asked me?"

Father Roland made as if to speak, and then caught himself. Again, for a passing flash, there came that mysterious change in him—a sudden dying out of the enthusiasm in his eyes, and in his face a grayness that came and went like a shadow of pain. In another moment he was saying:

"I'm not playing the part of the Good Samaritan, David. I've got a personal and a selfish reason for wanting you with me. It may be possible—just possible, I say—that I need you even more than you will need me." He held out his hand. "Let me have your checks, and I'll go ahead to the baggage-car and arrange to have your dunnage thrown off with mine."

David gave him the checks, and sat down after he had gone. He began to realize that, for the first time in many months, he was taking a deep and growing interest in matters outside of his own life.

WHO was Father Roland? For the first time, he asked himself the question. There was something of mystery about the little forest missioner that he found as strange and unanswerable as the thing he had seen in the eyes of the woman in the third car back.

Father Roland had not been asleep when he looked in quietly and saw him hunched down in his corner near the window, just as a little later he had seen the woman crumpled down in hers. It was as if the same oppressing hand had been upon them in those moments. And why had Father Roland asked him, of all men, to go with him as a comrade into the north? Following this he asked himself the still more puzzling question: Why had he accepted the invitation?

David thought again of the woman in the third coach back. Was she getting off here, he wondered? He hesitated between the thought of joining the missioner and the stronger impulse to go back into the third coach. He was conscious of a certain feeling of embarrassment as he returned for the third time to look at her. He was not anxious for her to see him again unless Father Roland was with him.

But the car was empty; the woman was gone. When he came to the seat where she had been, David paused, and would have turned back had he not chanced to look out through the window. He was just in time to catch the swift upturn of a passing face. It was *her* face.

She saw him and recognized him. Her eyes were filled again with that haunting fire; her lips trembled as if about to speak. And then, like a mysterious shadow, she drifted out of his vision.

For a space he remained in his seat and staring attitude, trying to pierce the gloom into which she had disappeared. As he drew back from the window, his eyes fell to the seat where she had been sitting, and he saw that she had left something behind. It was a very thin package, done up in a bit of newspaper and tied with red string. He picked it up and turned it over in his hands. It was five or six inches in width and perhaps eight in length, and was not more than half an inch in thickness. The newspaper in which the object was wrapped was worn until the print was almost obliterated.

At least, he had found an excuse. If she was still there,—if he could find her,—he had an adequate apology for going to her. She had forgotten something: it was simply a matter of courtesy on his part to return it. He began seeking for her, with the packet in his hand.

David's quest was futile. The woman had disappeared as completely as if she had actually floated away into that pit of darkness beyond the far end of the platform. He could draw but one conclusion. This place—Grisium—was her home; undoubtedly friends had been at the station to meet her. Even now, she might be telling them, or a husband, or a grown-up son, of the strange fellow who had stared at her in such a curious fashion. Disappointment in not finding her had brought a reaction. He had an inward and uncomfortable feeling of having been very silly, and of having allowed his imagination to get the better of his common sense. He had persuaded himself to believe that she had been in great distress. He had acted honestly and with chivalric intention. And yet, he was determined to keep this particular event of the night to himself.

A loud voice began to announce that the moment of departure had arrived, and as the passengers scrambled back into their coaches, Father Roland led the way to the baggage-car.

"They're going to let us ride with the dunnage, so there won't be any mistake or time lost when we get to Thoreau's."

They climbed up into the warm, lighted car, and after the baggage-man in charge had given them a sour nod of recognition, the first thing that David noticed was his own and Father Roland's property stacked up near the door. His own belongings were a steamer-trunk and two black morocco bags, while Father Roland's share of the pile consisted mostly of boxes and bulging gunny-sacks.

As the train slowed up for Thoreau's place, the baggage-man rose from his seat and rolled back the car door.

"Now step lively!" he commanded. "We've got no orders to stop here, and we'll have to dump this stuff out on the move!"

As he spoke he gave a hundred and ten pounds of beans a heave out into the night. Father Roland jumped to his assistance, and David saw his steamer-trunk and hand-bags follow the beans.

"The snow is soft and deep an' there won't be any harm done," Father Roland assured him, as he tossed out a fifty-pound box of prunes.

David heard sounds now—a man's shout, a fiendish tonguing of dogs, and above that a steady chorus of yapping which he guessed came from the foxes. Suddenly a lantern gleamed, then a second and a third, and a figure with a dark, bearded face began running along outside the door. The last box and the last bag went off, and with a sudden movement the trainman hauled David to the door.

"Jump!" he cried.

The face and the lantern had fallen behind, and it was as black as an abyss outside. With a mute prayer, David launched himself much as he had seen the bags and the boxes sent out. He fell with a thud in a soft blanket of snow. He looked up in time to see the little missioner flying out like a curious gargoyle through the door. The baggage-man's lantern waved, the engineer's whistle gave a responding screech, and the train whirred past.

Not until the tail-light of the last coach was receding like a great red firefly in the gloom did David get up. Father Roland was on his feet, and down the track came lanterns on the run.

David was breathing deeply. There was a warmth in his body that was new to him. It struck him all at once, as he heard Father Roland crunching through the snow, that he was experiencing an entirely new phase of life—a life he had read about at times and dreamed of at other times, but which he had never come physically in contact with. He had no time to ask himself whether he was enjoying these new sensations—he felt only the thrill of them as Thoreau and the Indian came up with their lanterns.

IN Thoreau himself, as he stood a moment later in the glow of the lanterns, was embodied the living, breathing spirit of this new world into which David's leap out of the baggage-car had plunged him. He was picturesquely of the wild: his face darkly bearded; his ivory-white teeth shining as he smiled a welcome; his tri-colored Hudson's Bay coat of wool with its frivolous red fringes thrown open at the throat; the bushy tail of his fisher-skin cap hanging over a shoulder—and with these things his voice rattling forth in French and half Indian his joy that Father Roland had arrived at last.

Behind him stood the Indian—dark, shrouded, a bronze sphinx of mystery. But his eyes shone as the little missioner greeted him—shone so darkly and so full of fire that for a moment David was fascinated by them. Then he was introduced.

"I am happy to meet you, m'sieu," said the Frenchman. The grip of his hand was like Father Roland's—something David had never felt among his former friends.

It was then that David made his first break in the etiquette of the forests—a fortunate one, as time proved. He did not know that shaking hands with an Indian was a matter of some formality; and so, when Father Roland said, "This is Mukoki, who has been with me for many years," David thrust out his fist.

Mukoki looked him straight in the eyes for a moment, and then his blanket-coat parted and his slim, dark hand reached out. Having received his lesson from both the missioner and the Frenchman, David put into his grip all the strength that was in him—the warmest hand-shake Mukoki had ever received in his life from a white man, with the exception of his master.

The next thing David heard was Father Roland's voice inquiring about supper. Thoreau's reply was in French.

"He says the cabin is like the inside of a great mast duck," chuckled the missioner. "Come, David. We'll leave Mukoki to gather up our freight."

A SHORT walk up the track, and David saw the cabin. It was back in the shelter of the black spruce and balsam, its two windows that faced the railroad warmly illumined by the light inside. Thoreau opened the door, and stood back.

"Après vous, m'sieu," he said, his white teeth shining at David. "It would give me bad luck, and possibly all of my foxes would die, if I went into my house ahead of a stranger."

David went in. An Indian woman stood with her back to him, bending over a table. She was as slim as a reed, and had the longest and sleekest black hair David had ever seen, done in two heavy braids that hung down her back. In another moment she had turned her round brown face, and her teeth and eyes were shining; but she spoke no word.

Thoreau did not introduce his wild-

flower wife. He had opened his cabin door and had let David enter before him, which was accepting him as a friend in his home; and therefore, in his understanding of things, an introduction was unnecessary and out of place.

Father Roland chuckled, rubbed his hands briskly, and said something to the woman in her own language that made her giggle shyly. It was contagious. David smiled. Father Roland's face was crinkled with little lines of joy. The Frenchman's teeth gleamed.

In the big cook-stove the fire snapped and crackled and popped. Marie opened the stove door to put in more wood, and her face shone rosy and her teeth were like milk in the fire-flash. Thoreau went to her and laid a big, heavy hand fondly on her black head, and said something in soft Cree that brought another giggle into Marie's throat, like the notes of a bird.

IN David there was a slow and wonderful awakening. Every fiber of him was stirred by the cheer of this cabin builded from logs rough-hewn out of the forest.

At a word from Marie, the Frenchman suddenly swung open the oven door and pulled forth a huge roasting-pan.

Father Roland gave a joyous cry.

"Mallards fattened on wild rice, and a rabbit—a rabbit roasted with an onion where his heart was, and well peppered!" gloated the little missioner. "Dear heaven, was there ever such a mess to put strength into a man's gizzard, David? And coffee—this coffee of Marie's! It is more than ambrosia. It is an elixir which transforms a cup into a fountain of youth. Take off your coat, David—take off your coat and make yourself at home!"

As David stripped off his coat, he thought of his steamer-trunk, with its tuxedo and full dress, its piqué shirts and poke collars, its suède gloves and kid-topped patent-leathers—and he felt the tips of his ears beginning to burn. He was sorry now that he had given the missioner the check for that trunk.

A minute later he was scrubbing his face in a big tin wash-basin, and then drying it on a towel that had once been a burlap bag. But he noticed that it was clean—as clean as the pink-flushed face of Marie.

When they sat down to the table,—Thoreau sitting for company, and Marie standing behind them,—he was at a loss at first to know how to begin. His plate was of tin, and a foot in diameter, and on it was a three-pound mallard duck dripping with juice and as brown as a ripe hazel-nut. He made a business of arranging his sleeves and drinking a glass of water while he watched the missioner.

With a chuckle of delight, Father Roland plunged the tines of his fork hilt-deep into the breast of the duck, seized a leg in his fingers, and dismembered the luscious anatomy on his plate with a deft twist and a sudden pull. With his teeth buried in the leg, he looked across at David. David had eaten duck before; that is, he had eaten it disguised in thick gravies and sauces; but this duck that he ate at Thoreau's table was like no other duck that he had ever tasted in all his life. He began with misgiving at the three-pound carcass, and ended with an entirely new feeling of stuffed satisfaction.

When the meal was finally ended, Father Roland settled back with a sigh of content, and drew a worn buckskin pouch from one of the voluminous pockets of his trousers. Out of this he produced a black pipe and tobacco. At the same time Thoreau was filling and lighting his own. In his studies and late-hour work at home David himself had been a pipe-smoker; but of late his pipe had been distasteful to him. Now, for the first time in weeks, he felt the return of his old desire. While they were eating, Mukoki and another Indian had brought in his trunk and bags, and he went now to one of the bags and got his own pipe and tobacco.

AGAINST the wall, a little in shadow, Marie had seated herself, her round chin in the cup of her brown hand, her dark eyes shining at this comfort and satisfaction of men. Such scenes as this amply repaid her for all her toil in life. She was happy. There was content in this cabin. David felt it. It impinged itself upon him, and through him. Within these log walls he felt the presence of that spirit—the joy of companionship and of life—which had so terribly eluded and escaped him in his home of wealth and luxury. He heard Marie speak only once that night, in a low, soft voice to Thoreau. She was silent, with the silence of the Cree wife in the presence of a stranger; but he knew that her heart was throbbing with the swift pulse of happiness, and for some reason he was glad when Thoreau nodded proudly toward a closed door and let him know that she was a mother. Marie heard him, and in that moment David caught in her face a look that made his heart ache—a look that should have been a part of his own life, and which he had missed.

A little later Thoreau led the way into the room which David was to occupy for the night. It was a small room, with a sapling partition between it and the one in which the missioner was to sleep. The fox-breeder placed a lamp on a table near the bed, and bade David good night.

It was past two o'clock, but David felt no desire for sleep. After he had taken off his shoes and partly undressed, he sat on the edge of his bed and allowed his mind to sweep back over the events of the past few hours. Again he thought of the woman in the room—the woman with the haunting face and those wonderful dark eyes. He drew forth from his coat pocket the package which she had forgotten, handling it curiously. He looked at the red string, noted how tightly the knot was tied, and turned it over and over in his hands before he snapped the cord. He was a little ashamed at his eagerness to know what was within its worn newspaper wrapping.

A half minute more, and he was leaning over in the full light of the lamp, his two hands clutching the thing which the paper had disclosed when it dropped to the floor—his eyes staring, his lips parted, and his heart seeming to stand still in the utter amazement of that moment.

To be continued next week

Code No. 2

By EDGAR WALLACE

Illustrations by George Gibbs

THE Secret Service never call themselves anything so melodramatic. If they speak at all, it is vaguely of "the Department"—not even "the Intelligence Department," you will note. It is a remarkable department, however. And not the least of the remarkable men who served—in a minor capacity, it is true—was Schiller.

He was an inventive young Swiss with a passion for foreign languages. He knew all the bad men in London—bad from the political standpoint—and was useful to the Chief Secretary (Intelligence); though Bland and the big men—well, they didn't dislike him, but they sort of— I don't know how to put it.

Watch a high-spirited horse pass a scrap of white paper on the road. He doesn't exactly shy, but he looks at the flapping thing expectantly.

Schiller was never in the Big Game, though he tried his best to get there. But the Big Game was played by men who "skew ciphers in the cradle," as Bland put it.

SCHILLER made a carefully planned attack upon the Chief Secretary, who had reached that delicate stage of a man's career which is represented by the interregnum between the end of a period of usefulness and consciousness of the fact.

Sir John Grandor had been, in his time, the greatest intelligence man in Europe; but now—he still talked of wireless telegraphy as "a wonderful invention."

Yet Sir John was chief, and a fairly shrewd chief. His seal of office was Code No. 2, which no mortal eye save his had seen. It lay on the bottom shelf of the safe, between steel-bound covers—sheet after sheet of writing in his own neat hand.

No. 2 Code is a very secret one. It is the code that the big agents employ. It is not printed, nor are written copies circulated; it is learned under the tuition of the chief himself. The men who know Code No. 2 do not boast of their knowledge, because their lives hang upon a thread—even in peace times.

Schiller could never be a big agent. For one thing, he was a naturalized foreign subject. The big men are nationals, trained to the game from the day they enter the office. They are educated men, conditioned for life to dissociate themselves from the land of their birth; and who they are, or where they live, is known only to three men, two of whom have no official existence. Sir John liked Schiller and did many things for him. He told him stories of his past adventures, and Schiller listened attentively. In the course of one of these post-prandial discussions (he was a most presentable young man and Sir John frequently took him home to dinner) Schiller casually mentioned Code No. 2. He spoke of it with easy familiarity, and Sir John discussed the code in general terms. He told his guest how it was kept in the special safe, how it was made up on the loose-leaf system, and how it was a nuisance, because it was always in disorder, since he had to consult it every day and invariably replaced the sheets he had been using on the top, irrespective of their alphabetical right to that position.

The young man had innocently suggested that he should come to Sir John's office every night and sort them out; but the old man had smiled benevolently and said he thought not.

BLAND summoned Grigsby to his office one day, and that florid young man came to the tick of the clock.

"This fellow Schiller is bothering me," said Bland in the low tones that are almost second nature in the service. "He is a smart fellow and very useful, but I mistrust him."

"Schiller lay on the bench. 'He's tired,' said Bland. 'Let him sleep on—and don't let the flies disturb him,' he added humorously."

"He has a blameless record," said the other, staring out of the window, "and he knows little of the bigger things—Sir John is a ditherer, but he's close enough. What is worrying you now?"

Bland strode up and down the room.

"He is inventing a new wireless receiver," he said, "and he has got the old man interested. He works all day at it in his room, and at night he carries it down to Sir John's office, where it is most religiously locked in the safe. Of course, it is absurd to imagine that the box—it is about the size of a biscuit-tin—can contain anything with human intelligence, and get out in an air-tight safe and walk around or go squinting at the code; but, somehow, I don't like it."

Grigsby chuckled.

"It's a new one on me," he confessed. "I'm not denying that Schiller isn't clever—he invented a draught excluder for my room which is a model of ingenuity; but I can hardly imagine a wireless receiver that reads and transmits a code from the interior of a steel safe."

Bland was not convinced.

He sent for May Prince. She was boil-

day-making in Devonshire, but came at once to town—a straight slip of a girl. She looked eighteen, though she was in truth ten years older, with the loveliest smile in the world, a pair of appraising gray eyes, and a mouth that in repose was a little inclined to droop.

"Sorry to disturb you on your holiday," said Bland, "but I want Schiller kept under observation. Next week you will be discharged from the Department for neglect of duty. You will retire with a grievance, and you will tell Schiller, whom you will continue to meet, that I am a beast, and that I lose a great deal of money backing race-horses. I will have a few bookmakers' accounts prepared for you, which you will show discreetly."

"Is he to blackmail you?" she asked.

Bland shook his head.

"If he is all I think he is, he will not. No; he might give you confidence for confidence. So long."

And May, with a nod, went out.

SCHILLER'S invention took an unconscionable time to develop. Yet he was enthusiastic over its possibilities, and inspired the Chief with some of his enthusiasm. He worked in his spare time at the machine; and regularly every evening, at five minutes before six, he would carry his heavy box to the Chief's office, solemnly deposit his burden on the iron grill that formed the one shelf of the safe, and watch the locking up with a jealous eye.

And May Prince had nothing to report.

Three days before that fatal 1st of August which brought destruction and misery to Europe, Bland, who had been working day and night in the interest of his department, went up to Schiller's room to question him regarding the bona fides of a certain Antonio Malatesta, suspected of being an agent of the Central Powers. Bland very seldom visited the offices of his subordinates, but on this occasion his telephone was out of order.

He found the door locked, and knocked impatiently. Presently it was opened by the smiling Schiller. The table was covered with a litter of wire, electric batteries, tools, and screws; but of the great wireless receiver there was no sign.

"You are looking for my wonder-box, sir?" said Schiller. "She is in my safe. Soon I will give you the most remarkable demonstration! Even to-day I caught a signal from the Admiralty—through a closed window."

But Bland was not listening. He stood erect, his nose in the air, sniffing.

There was a faint sweetish smell—a scent of camphor and something else. Schiller watched him through narrowed eyes.

"H'm," said Bland, and turning on his heel left the room.

A telegram lay on his table: it had been delivered in his brief absence:

Schiller is agent in Central European pay. He is head of cryptogram department. Have proof. MAY.

Bland pulled open the drawer of his desk, took out an automatic pistol, raced through the door, and took the stairs two at a time.

Schiller's door was open, but he had gone.

He had not passed out through the lobby or the front entrance of the building; but a commissionaire on duty at the side door had seen him pass and had heard him hail a cab.

Bland went back to his office and put through a telephone call to the police:

Watch all railway stations and docks. Arrest and detain Augustus Schiller.

He described him briefly, but with a sure touch.

"IT is very lamentable," said Sir John, really troubled, "but I can't think he has taken away anything of importance. Has he removed his invention?"

"I have that all right, Sir John," said Bland grimly; "and to-night, with your permission, I am going to see what happens."

"But surely you don't think—?"

Bland nodded.

"'I will take this wall first and I will search for the panel.' His hand was outstretched when —'Stop!' came the girl's sharp warning."

"I haven't monkeyed with it at all, but I've listened very carefully through a microphone, and there is no doubt that it contains a clockwork mechanism. It is almost silent, but I have detected the sound. I suggest that we place the box where it is usually put, leave the safe door open, and watch."

Sir John frowned. All this seemed a reflection on his judgment, and as such was to be resented; but he was too loyal a man in the service to which he had given forty-five years of his life to allow his injured vanity to come before his public duty.

At six o'clock the box was placed in the safe.

"Is that where it was always put?" asked Bland.

"I generally—in fact, invariably—put it on the iron grill."

"Just above Code 2. I see, sir."

The Chief Secretary frowned again, but this time in an effort of thought.

"That is true," he said slowly. "Once, I remember, when the box was placed a little to one side, Schiller pushed it to the center; which I thought was a little impertinent of him."

THE two men drew up a couple of arm-chairs and seated themselves before the safe. Their vigil promised to be a long one.

Eight, nine, ten o'clock passed, and nothing happened.

"I think it is rather ridiculous, don't you?" asked Sir John testily, as the quarter to eleven chimed.

"It seems so," said Bland doggedly; "but I want to see— Good heavens—look!"

Sir John gasped.

Immediately beneath the box was Code 2, inclosed in a leather binder, the edges of which were bound, for the sake of durability, with a thin ribbon of steel.

Now, slowly, the cover of the book was rising. It jerked up a little, then fell, leaped again, and fell back as if there were something inside which was struggling to get free. Then, of a sudden, the cover opened and remained stiffly erect, forming with the contents the letter L, the upright of which was the cover.

There was a click, and the interior of the safe was illuminated with a soft greenish radiance. Upon the top page of the code it threw a glow which lasted for nearly a minute. Then it died away, and the cover of the book fell.

"Phew!" whistled Bland.

He lifted the black box carefully from the safe and carried it to Sir John's desk, examined the bottom of the box with a long and patient scrutiny, then set it down.

"Code No. 2 is in the hands of the enemy, sir," he said.

IT was daylight when he finished his investigations. Half the box was taken up by accumulators. They supplied the current which, operating through a powerful magnet, lifted the cover of the code-book. They gave the light to the wonderful little mercurial-vapor lamps, which afforded the concealed camera just enough light to make an effective exposure.

"The little clockwork arrangement is, of course, simple," said Bland; "that sets the time for the machine to work, and switches the current on and off. It probably opens and closes the shutters which hide the lens and the lamp and the magnet. I suspected the camera when I smelled the film in his room."

Sir John, white and haggard, nodded.

"Get me out of this as well as you can, Bland," he said gruffly. "I'll retire at the end of the year—I'm doomed."

He walked to the door, and paused with his fingers on the handle.

"There are thirty men's lives in Schiller's keeping," he said. "Their names and addresses are in that book—I suppose he got through the book. I am so careless that I changed the order of the pages almost every day, and the devil has been at work for nine months. He ought to have worked through the book by now, for there was a different sheet on top every time."

"I'll do my best, sir," said Bland.

SCHILLER was away, and safely away, before war was declared. He was seen in Holland and was traced to Cologne. There was no possibility of changing the code, and messages were already coming through from agents.

Bland took a bold step. Through a man in Denmark he got into communication with Schiller and offered to make a deal. But Schiller was not selling. In the telegraphed words of the emissary whom Bland had sent:

Schiller is receiving an enormous fee from enemy government for decoding wireless messages that your agents are sending. He alone knows the code.

Bland again got into communication with the traitor, offering him an enormous sum if he would consent to return to a neutral country and retain his secret.

"Meet me in Holland and I will fix everything," his message ended. It elicited from the ingenious master spy a reply that was characteristic:

Come into Belgium and I will arrange.

A mad suggestion, for Belgium was now enemy ground. But Bland took his life in his hands and a long glass dagger in his hand-bag, and left the same night for the Continent.

BLAND went into Belgium by the back door and made a laborious way to Brussels. It is not necessary to explain the means and methods he employed to make his entry into that carefully guarded land; it is sufficient to say that he met Schiller, looking very prosperous, in the *estaminet* of the Gold Lion at Hasbrulle, a small village on the Ghent-Lille road.

"You are a very brave man, Mr. Bland," complimented Schiller, "and I wish I could oblige you in what you wish. Unfortunately, I can not."

"Then why did you bring me here?" asked Bland.

The other looked at him curiously.

"I have a certain code," he said quietly. "I have it complete with certain exceptions; there are three pages missing. What do you want for them?"

Here was a staggerer for a smaller man than Bland.

"That is a fair offer," he said, calmness itself; "but what is the particular code you are buying?"

"No. 2," said the other. "I thought—"

Bland interrupted him.

"No. 2 Code!" he said, sipping his hock (he was for the time being a Belgian peasant). "Of course that's rubbish. Neither you nor I know No. 2 Code; the code you stole was No. 3."

Schiller smiled superiorly.

"When you get back to London," he said, "ask your chief whether 'Agate' does not mean 'Transports loading at Borkum.'"

"You might have got hold of that particular word by accident," said Bland grudgingly.

"Ask him if 'Optique' does not mean 'Emperor has gone to Dresden,'" persisted the calm Schiller.

Bland looked round the room thoughtfully.

"You know a great deal, my friend," he said.

THE woman who managed the *estaminet* came in a little later, and found Bland pulling slowly at a rank cigar, his elbows on the table, a half emptied book before him.

The woman glanced with a little smile at Schiller.

"He's tired," said Bland, emptying the book. "Let him sleep on—and don't let the flies disturb him," he added humorously.

Schiller lay sideways on the bench at which Bland was sitting, his face to the wall. Over his head was a coarse blue handkerchief.

"He will not be disturbed," said Madame, and pocketed the five-sou tip that Bland gave her with a grateful smirk.

"When he wakes," said Bland at the door, "tell him I have gone on to Ghent."

Three hours later a German soldier, who had come for his evening coffee, whisked away the handkerchief that covered the sleeper's face and stammered: "*Gott!*"

For Schiller was dead—and had been dead for three hours. It took even the doctor quite a long time to discover the blade of the glass dagger in his heart.

A WEEK after this Bland was dressing for dinner in his West End flat, and had reached the patience stage of bowtying when his valet informed him that Grigsby had called.

"I told him you were dressing, sir," said Taylor; "but Mr. Grigsby is that full of his horse winning the Gatwick steeplechase that he won't take 'no' for an answer."

"Show him up here," said Bland.

Mr. Grigsby came noisily into the dressing-room, though his greeting of Bland was a little cold.

"I've a bone to pick with you," he said. "What have you been saying to Lady Greenholm about me? You know my feelings about Alice—"

"Wait a moment, please," said Bland sharply, and turned to his servant. "Taylor, you can go to the General Post Office with the letter you will find on the hall stand."

Mr. Grigsby waited until he heard the door of the flat close, then walked into the passage and shot the bolt of the front door.

He came back to where Bland was standing with his back to the fire, his hands thrust into his trousers pockets.

"You're sure he had No. 2?" he asked.

Bland nodded.

Grigsby bit his lip thoughtfully.

"It isn't worth while worrying about how he got it—now," he said. "The question is, who will get it next?"

Bland opened a cigar-case, bit off the end of a cigar, and lit up before he replied.

"What news have you at this end?" he asked. "I was across the border before they discovered his death. Naturally, I have heard nothing save what our Amsterdam man told me."

"The code is in London," said Grigsby briefly. "As soon as he was dead a cablegram was sent to Valparaiso by the authorities in Brussels. It was addressed to a man named Von Hoech—probably a third party. Here it is."

He took out a pocket-book and laid a slip of paper on the table. The message was short and was in Spanish:

Schiller's London lodging.

"It's rather puzzling," said Bland. "Schiller wouldn't have written the code out—he was too clever for that. And yet, he must have given the authorities a guaranty that the secret should not be lost with his death. It has probably been arranged that he should tell some person agreed upon—in this case a man in South America—in what manner the code was hidden. The exact locale he left until his death, probably sealed up among his private papers."

"That is a sound theory," said Grigsby. He told you nothing more?"

Bland shook his head.

"I had to kill him, of course," he said, with a note of regret. "It was pretty beastly, but the lives of thirty good men were in his holding. He probably knew where each was stationed."

"And the man that comes after will also know," said the other grimly. "We start to-night to make a very scientific search of his lodgings."

But the flat in Soho Square yielded no profit.

For the greater part of a fortnight three of the cleverest Intelligence men (including Lecomte from the French department) probed and searched, slitting furniture, pulling up floors, and dismantling cupboards.

And the result was a negative one.

"I'll swear it is there," said Bland dejectedly. "We've overlooked something. Where is May Prince?"

"She's at the Chief Censor's—she has an office there," explained Grigsby.

"Ask her to come over."

May came in some triumph.

"I thought you'd send for me," she said. "I could have saved you such a lot of trouble!"

Bland apologized.

"I've neglected you terribly, May," he said. "Do you know, I have never seen you since you sent me the wire about Schiller?"

She nodded.

"I know. Schiller is dead, isn't he?"

"How did you know?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"One reads things in the Censor's office—innocent letters from Holland with messages written between the lines in formic acid and milk which become quite visible if you use the correct formulæ. Mr. Schiller was a remarkable man, and his father was one of the greatest scholars Switzerland has produced, though he was blind. What do you want of me now?"

BLAND explained briefly. The girl knew of Code No. 3 and the secrecy that surrounded it, and realized the urgency of the situation.

"By the way, how did you know that he was an enemy agent?" he asked.

"I discovered his code," she replied cryptically.

Accompanied by the two men, she went to the flat in Soho Square. The flooring had been replaced and the rooms were habitable again. She made a tour through the flat, then returned to the big dining-room.

"This is the room where the code is," she said decisively.

It was a cheerful apartment, papered in a rich brown. A broad dado of a simple design belted the walls, and the wainscoting had been painted a chocolate color to harmonize with the paper. From the ceiling hung an electric fitting; May glanced at this.

"We've had that down," said Bland, "and the wainscot has been taken out—but we've found nothing."

"Will you leave me alone here for a few minutes?" asked the girl.

The two men withdrew; but they were hardly out of the room before she followed, her eyes blazing with the joy of discovery.

"Got it!" she laughed. "Oh, I know—I know!"

"Where is it?" demanded the astonished Bland.

"Wait," she said eagerly. "When do you expect your South American visitor?"

"To-morrow. Of course, the room will be guarded and he will have no chance to search."

Her eyes were still dancing when she nodded.

"We shall see—to-morrow. I fancy you will have a frank visitor from Valparaiso, and when he comes I want you to send for me."

"What on earth—"

"Wait, wait, please! What will he say?" She closed her eyes and frowned. "I can tell you his name; it is Raymond Vitelli—"

"You know this all along?" asked the astonished Grigsby; but she shook her head.

"I know it when I went into the room," she said; "but now I am guessing. I think he will offer to help you discover the code, and he will tell you there is a secret panel in the wall and that it will take days to make the discovery. And I think he will ask you to be present when he makes his search."

"He needn't ask that," said Bland unpleasantly. "I think you're very mysterious, May—but I've a kind of feeling that you're right."

She had a few questions to ask the janitor of the building before she left.

"Mr. Schiller did all his own decorations in the dining-room, didn't he?"

"Yes, miss," said the man. "A regular feller he was for potterin' about with a paste-pot or a paint-brush."

"And he has paid his rent in advance?"

"That's right, miss."

"And said that nothing was to be done to the flat till he came back?"

"His very words!" said the care-taker.

"I thought so," said May.

AT ten o'clock next morning a card was brought to Bland. It was inscribed:

Señor X. Bertramo Silva.

And, written in a corner, "*of Valparaiso.*"

Bland pressed a bell, and in a little while Grigsby and the girl came in.

"He's come," said Bland shortly, and handed her the card.

The visitor was shown in. He was a dapper little man with a pointed beard, and he spoke excellent English. Moreover, after the preliminaries he plunged straight into the heart of his subject.

"I am going to be very frank with you, Mr. Bland," he began; and Bland, shooting a swift glance at the girl, saw the laughter in her eyes.

"I was for some time an agent of the Central Powers—I tell you this because I wish you clearly to understand my position," he went on. "Safe in South America, I thought no call would be made upon my services. A few weeks ago, however, I received a cablegram which was intercepted by the British authorities.

"I had known, of course, that in certain eventualities I might be obliged to come to England to make a search for certain documents, and that I should learn the place where they were hidden by telegram. That telegram came. I am here!"

He flung out his arms dramatically.

"I came straight to you on my arrival. I tell you frankly why I came, because I decided, the night before I reached Plymouth, that the game was not worth the candle. I will assist you, as far as possible, to discover the documents; and then I shall, if you will allow me, return to South America."

It was all very amazing to Bland. The man had said almost exactly what May had predicted he would say. He looked at the girl again, and she nodded.

"You understand that your search—" began Bland.

"Will be under the eyes of the police?" interrupted the man from Valparaiso. "I should prefer it!"

"You would like to start your search at once, I suppose?" asked Bland.

"The sooner the better," said the other heartily.

"One moment."

It was the girl who spoke.

"You have a very good memory, señor?" she asked.

For just a fraction of a second the smile died from the man's eyes.

"I have an excellent memory, madame," he said curtly.

THEY went together in a cab, and were admitted to Schiller's flat by the police officer on guard.

"Have you any theory?" asked Bland, as they stood in the hall.

"Yes," replied the other quickly; "I think the documents are hidden in a recess in the wall behind a secret panel. It may take a week to find the panel. This is a very old house, and it is possible Mr. Schiller chose it for some structural advantage it may have."

Again Bland thought rapidly. The frankness of the man, his willingness to help, the talk of secret panels, was all in accordance with the girl's amazing prophecy.

He saw the glee in her eyes—glee at the mystification of her chief.

Then he turned to the little man.

"Go ahead," he said.

Señor Silva bowed.

"I will take this wall first," he said, "and I will search for the evidence of a panel. My fingers are perhaps more sensitive than yours—"

His hand was outstretched toward the dado when—

"Stop!"

At the sound of the girl's sharp warning Señor Silva turned.

"Before you go any farther," she said, "let me ask you if you value your life?"

The Chilean shrugged, and spread his hands.

"Naturally, madame."

The girl turned to Bland.

"If this man learns Code 2—what will happen to him?"

Bland looked from May to the stranger.

"He will certainly die," he said simply.

The man nodded.

"You may go on if you wish—but you are starting a little too far to the right."

His face went a ghastly gray.

"To the right!" he stammered.

"The message to you begins at the door, Señor Vitelli," she said calmly. "The code does not begin until you reach the window. Will you continue?"

He shook his head, having no words.

Bland called in his men, and they hustled the little South American into a cab.

"And now explain," said Bland.

MAY walked to the wall near the door, and touched the dado.

"Feel," she said.

Bland's fingers touched the wall-paper gingerly. He felt a few pin-point eruptions; then he passed his hand to the right and felt more. Then the truth dawned on him.

"Braille!" he whispered.

The girl nodded.

"Schiller's father was a blind man," she said, "and Schiller evidently took up the study of the alphabet by which blind men read. Silva was informed how the code had been written, and learned it against the time when it would be necessary to take over Schiller's work."

She ran her fingers along the dado.

"There are seven lines of writing, and they run round the room," she said. "Schiller pasted on this dado himself, a bit at a time—as fast as he was able to photograph Code 2. This is how the top line begins:

"To Raymond Vitelli," she read. "Keep up pretense helping police; be frank, as I have told you. Tell them there is a secret panel, and you will be able to come often. Code begins: 'Abraham' means 'New guns have been fitted—'"

Bland caught her hand and gently drew it away.

"If you want to be a nice live girl and dine with me to-night," he said half humorously, "do not pursue your investigations any farther."

That afternoon Bland did a little amateur paper-stripping, and made a good job of it.

Hello, Hello Girls!

IF young men only had a little fact they might still be holding down all the telephone switchboards. They had first chance, but they simply couldn't keep their tempers. Unfortunately they used to leave their switchboards to go around the corner and settle any difficulties with their subscribers in a personal manner. Miss Lena Ratcliffe of the St. Paul Exchange Building in Baltimore came in when the tactless boys went out, and has held her job for 30 years, which gives her the title of the oldest telephone girl in the world. She has said "Number, please," more than 6,000,000 times, and has been polite eight hours a day for all those years. After all, boys, maybe it was more fun being street-car conductors.

WHO would think from her calm air that this woman says hello to the President of the United States every day? She is Mrs. Harriott Daley, chief operator at the National Capital in Washington. She supervises the wires of 600 legislators and the private line to the White House. Several kinds of people would give all kinds of money to find out a few of the things she knows, but for the past sixteen years she has kept the secrets of a whole nation without the slightest trouble. The morning after you have told your wife the secrets of the Order of Antelopes of Skamenbles and you begin to worry for fear she'll tell, consider Mrs. Daley's record and be calm.

Photograph by Paul Thompson

A WOMAN'S voice came agonizingly to Central: "Send a doctor—Willie has fallen down the well!" But the natural intelligence of the operator in question told her that a ladder would be more appropriate, so she plugged in for the fire department. Miss Frances Speich of a Buffalo Exchange answered a signal flash one night and heard a man say: "Every one in the house is dying!" After six fruitless attempts, she got a doctor and an ambulance to the scene just in time to save a family of four from asphyxiation.

Photograph by Paul Thompson

WHEN a kind friend over the telephone says, "The dam is broken—run for your life," you arrange to leave hurriedly without your straw hat. Not so if you're a telephone operator. The Bayless dam just above the town of Austin, Pennsylvania, broke one night, and in the exchange building by the river, Kathleen Lyon and Lena Brinkley received the message. The girls stayed at their boards until the mountain of water was almost upon the building. Here is Miss Brinkley thinking that it's all very well to save lives, but that her next position will be in a dry town.

TELEPHONE operators have one annoying trait—they are always getting married. Things came to such a pass that one manager had to advertise for plain girls. Miss Loretta Griffin of the North Exchange of Buffalo is one who did not apply. Last year Miss Griffin was voted the most beautiful girl in Buffalo, and for a prize was given a trip to the San Francisco Exposition. It almost seems as if some of us plain ones might have had the trip, and that beauty should be its own reward.

IF you ever take a notion to get married, call up Miss Loretta Dermody at the Marriage License Bureau and she'll tell you the traffic rules. She knows the office hours of the city Hymen, alias Clerk Scully, and all about the high cost of licenses. Our heroine has just replied to a would-be marriagée: "No—we do not have rings for sale." She agreed with us when we wittily suggested that every school should have a course in "How to Get Married," and that licenses should be displayed in all department stores.

Photograph by Paul Thompson

SAYS the manager to the actor, "Are you an experienced switchboard engineer? No? Then we can't use you." Mary Nash had to be a telephone operator before she could take the part of Wanda Kelley in "The Woman." Miss Nash made the connections just like a regular hello girl, and between calls performed the difficult feat of successfully defying political bosses. For a while it was a toss-up whether the stage or the switchboard would be her fate. But she kept on being an actress.

Photograph by White

People Who K

DURING the season of '89-'90 there came to Nice a certain Mme. Sophie Hermanstein, who by reason of her toilettes, her entertainments, and her wit quickly became a leader of fashion in that gay winter city. Mme. Hermanstein was French, the wife—report had it—of an enormously rich diamond merchant in Johannesburg. Then, one day, Mme. Hermanstein disappeared—walked right out of her fine house, as it were, and dissolved into thin air. At first no one thought much about it—one doesn't at Nice. "Another fly-by-night," people said, and proceeded to forget her. Presently it came to light, however, that her priceless jewels were still in the safe and her bank account intact at the bankers'—and that was another story. Mme. Hermanstein was no adventuress come to the end of her tether; she was an important person—a person to be searched for. Her husband came on from South Africa. She had not been a particularly good or home-keeping wife, he said, but he loved her nevertheless. And he really owned those diamond mines. Nice fermented. Had the handsome Sophie eloped with one of her chosen cavaliers? But not impossible! No person was missing from the coterie she had surrounded herself with. Had she been drowned in bathing? A possibility. But she hated sea bathing. Had she been murdered? But why? There you are—just where you started from. This was twenty-six years ago—and from that time to this no one has heard from Mme. Sophie Hermanstein.

THE sort of missing girls is usually the badlands. And in this dreary cross-current of life detectives, these several years, have been searching for pretty Elsa Nagel of Hoboken, who got into an automobile one afternoon after school, and drove off with a man who invited her to go for a spin around the block. Well, Elsa rode right out of the lives of every one who had ever known her. She never came back. Her people, her friends, never heard from her again—not one of them. As though the nothingness of nothing had devoured her—as indeed it had.

FOR the generation now entering middle age the question, "What became of Charlie Ross?" has a somber hold upon the imagination as it periodically recalls this tale of two cities—Philadelphia and New York. For Charlie Ross is the traditional "missing person," and his disappearance in 1874 has probably sent more mothers flying upstairs in the dark, their hearts in their mouths, to look at their cradles, than any event in history, before or since. Charlie Ross was abducted. He was lured away from home by two men in a buggy with offers of candy and toys. He was held for ransom. But the alarm that spread over the country placed difficulties in the way of the abductors, who realized that they could not receive the money without risking arrest. So Charlie Ross was never found. If he is alive to-day he is forty-six years old. Many waifs on reaching manhood have asserted their belief in their identity with Charlie Ross. A thousand clues have been run down. The mother that bore him is dead. But his story still lives. In 1900 Mr. and Mrs. Edward Cudahy of Omaha, recalling Charlie Ross, paid $25,000 to kidnappers for the recovery of their child rather than call in the police and run the risk of never seeing him again, though by so doing they realized that they were putting a premium upon kidnapping.

Photograph from Brown Brothers

IN May, 1915, Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Glass of Jersey City, with their three children, Blanche, Madeline, and James (whom this story concerns), went for a fortnight's holiday to Greeley, Pennsylvania. The morning after their arrival Mrs. Glass and the two little girls went to the post-office, hard by, leaving three-year-old James playing in a field near the farmhouse. Mrs. Glass was gone about five minutes. In the interim no vehicle of any kind passed along the road. In the country stillness a child's screams would have resounded. The mother saw no person near the place. Yet in that five minutes little James disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. Bloodhounds were put on his trail, woods beaten, wells drained, a dam dynamited and the water drawn off, gypsy camps searched, and lonely houses ransacked; but not so much as a wisp of his golden hair was ever found.

WHERE do they go, these peop who nonchalantly vanish, a fail to answer when we seek to ri them up through the universal swirl board of which the wires are printe ink? There was Johan, Duke Orth, for instance, who was m leaving the Emperor's ball at the I perial Palace in Vienna back in Ja nary, 1870, and was never seen aga True, when Duke Johan disappear advertising and journalism had n reached the pinnacle they now c copy; but, for all that, enough w printed about him at the time have sunk the *Lusitania* unaided a submarine. Until she died, h mother, the venerable Grand Duche Antonia of Hapsburg-Tuscana, p sisted in believing that he had be murdered or had fulfilled a suici pact. And death seems the mo plausible explanation of this mys But, leaving out the question of "Why?" once this theory is adopte up pops the unanswerable questio "What became of the body?"

Photograph from Ullstein.

A GAY crowd of Anglo-Indians gathered one night twenty years ago to watch the moon rise over the old Krishni tomb at Darjeeling. Among the company were Captain Alan Cahusac and his wife, just out "from home." Mrs. Cahusac was young, pretty (as her picture tells us), and well born—a Miss Montresor of Dublin. Some one proposed a game of hide-and-seek before the ride home. The game was never finished. They are still looking for Mrs. Cahusac. Eventually all India was enlisted in the game. Jungle and bazaar, walled city and teak forest, were fine-combed for her. Through all the subterranean channels of that mysterious no-white-man's-land of native life the search was carried by the famous secret service. After ten years or so her husband went back to England to die, and Mrs. Cahusac became a legend—a horror tale to be told by ayahs to naughty children, along with the ghost stories of that north country.

SOME one you love drops out of sight—little son, husband, father, or friend. How can you find him? If you have any theories on the subject, communicate them to Mrs. W. C. Richter of Brooklyn. She'll be glad to hear from you. She's tried everything in the world in the effort to find her little son, Robert Stryker, who disappeared in Florida in December, 1914; and now she's got nothing to do in the world but wait. Robert left his mother one morning in the back yard and entered the kitchen. Shortly afterward he must have left the house by the front door, as a tiny broom he was playing with and a few footprints were found. At this point all trace of Robert ends.

ve Disappeared

FOUR years ago John Plentge, son of E. W. Plentge, postmaster at Cape Girardeau, Missouri, left the home town to go upon the stage. The handsomest boy in Girardeau was John—and a good boy too, the town-people will tell you, barring being stage-struck. John went to Chicago and got a part in a skit touring the four-a-day circuit. For a year he wrote home regularly. Then all of a sudden his letters stopped. A year passed and no word from John. Mrs. Plentge became dangerously ill as the result of worry. When her husband realized that she could not live, and could not die happy unless word of John was forthcoming, he packed his bag and went to Chicago to search for John. His search carried him into many strange places and occupied a month. Old Mr. Plentge then went home sorrowfully. He did not tell John's mother that the boy had disappeared as completely as if he had been absorbed into the fourth dimension. No, he told her that John was well and happy and going to write soon and had sent his love. So Mrs. Plentge died quite happy—but that does not alter the mystery of John.

WHEN the remains of a citizen as well known as the late Timothy D. Sullivan can lie in the morgue unrecognized for two weeks and barely escape the Potter's Field, it is clear that of the thousands of bodies consigned to unmarked graves many might be reclaimed if there existed an adequate identification system in our cities and towns. William O'Sullivan, a traveling salesman living at 406 West Twenty-second Street, New York, trusted employee of the American Tobacco Company, was last seen walking down Broadway on the afternoon of August 1, 1913. He had just arrived in town from the road, and was on his way to his office, he told a passing acquaintance. Yet right here William O'Sullivan merges into that weird hinterland of people who disappear. Was it aphasia—loss of memory and hence identity? Was it foul play? Was it accident, death, and the Potter's Field?

THE case of every person who disappears eventually resolves itself into two conclusions: that some one has information about the missing individual without knowing it; or that some one has the information and a reason for concealing it. That no one has such information is inconceivable. A person simply can not live or die without some other person knowing about it. Thus we are either alive or dead and accounted for, or alive or dead and unaccounted for. Annie Barclay, age twenty-two, height 5 feet 7, brown of hair, fair of complexion, Scotch in accent and appearance, disappeared in Winnipeg the other day. Some one knows where Annie is and won't tell, or some one knows and doesn't know he knows. That's where the madness of it all comes in.

"WHAT happened to Eve Lanteime?" It is seven years now since "the most beautiful woman in Paris" disappeared from the gay night world of the boulevards of which she was the evening star—"La Reine Nocturne," they called her. Yet the question is still asked in the foyers of the theaters in which she used to act, in the restaurants she used to frequent, in the parks where she was wont to drive behind milk-white Andalusian mules, the admired of all beholders. The flight of the moth is swift and short, but Lanteime's beauty was too memorable to be forgotten in seven days or seven years. Men ask the question in clubs and smoking-rooms as the evening wanes and talk runs to things of yesterday; for she was known by all, this Lanteime, and variously loved. There are those who say she lies at rest under the ground in a church-yard in the vine country from which she came. And there are those who say she dwells, a hopeless maniac, in a castle in hither Spain owned by a ducal grandee. But no one really knows. All that any one knows is this: The editor of a famous Parisian morning journal gave a party one night on his house-boat on the Seine. It was, in colloquial verbiage, "a wild night." In the morning Mlle. Lanteime was missing. She was never heard of again. Some weeks later, it is true, the body of a woman found in the river was given Christian burial as "Eve Lanteime," and the hearse was followed by some of the most prominent men in Paris. But things leak out. Secrets are hard to keep. No one doubts now that it was not "La Reine Nocturne" who was buried. What befell the poor "night queen" is whispered,—yes, but never voiced.

THIS is the boy Mrs. Thompson believes may be Robert as he now is, aged nine. She does not know for surely. She probably never will know exactly. She'll have to go through life wondering, in this mood if he isn't—in that mood if he is. This boy was found, a waif, wandering in the streets of Fort Worth, Texas, two years ago. A woman identified him as having been abandoned by a man answering so closely the description of Robert's father that Mrs. Thompson traveled out there and brought the boy back with her. She couldn't identify him, four years changes a little boy too much. The maybe-Robert, however, remembers being carried off from "a warm place into a cold place" one night, and hurried away by a "choo-choo." Hunger and cold still bitters he knows too, and he loves his maybe-mother very dearly.

THIS is Robert Wilson Thompson when, aged four, he disappeared in 1911 from his mother's home in Springfield, Massachusetts. Mrs. Thompson left Robert playing in the kitchen one evening while she went around the corner to buy some milk for supper. When she came back Robert was not there. Mrs. Thompson finally came to the conclusion that Robert's father, from whom she was separated, had entered and stolen him in her absence. Mr. Thompson, however, is known to have died in San Francisco last year. He was thought to be a bachelor; no one had ever seen a little boy with him.

TWENTY-FIVE years old, normal in every way, with no troubles that have ever been revealed, no enemies, no blackmail, no illness, no lover, no known motive to seek flight or concealment from a pleasant environment — Dorothy Arnold, daughter of a wealthy New Yorker, stepped out of sight on a December day in 1910 and has never stepped back again. At 11.30 a. m. she told her mother she was going shopping. At noon she purchased a box of candy at Park & Tilford's. An hour later she bought a book at Brentano's. Between two and three o'clock she passed the time of day with a friend on Fifth Avenue. And then Dorothy Arnold walked right from Fifth Avenue into blackness, and has never emerged. An attractive figure she must have been that afternoon, red-cheeked, bright-eyed, dressed in blue serge and black fox—but there the curtain falls on her. More than $150,000 has been spent searching for her. Hundreds of people have seen her in hundreds of places, from Russia to Alaska. Cranks have conjectured, theorists have speculated. Bodies have been exhumed, and absurd testimony listened to with the utmost gravity. But, living or dead, not one pin-point of light has been shed upon her vanishment.

Photograph by Brown Brothers

Too Much Johnson

Photographs by Paul Thompson

YOU remember the author who made his hero a blind man. "Why?" questioned his publishers. "Why," said the author, "there are 60,000 blind men in this country, and every one of them will want a copy." On the same principle we trust that all Johnsons in the U. S. will be more regular at the newsstands hereafter. First on the page we have Congressman Albert Johnson from the State of Washington. He was an editor himself once, and he ought to stand by.

WE are always getting Burges Johnson and Gelett Burgess mixed up. One of them wrote the famous epic, "I never saw a purple cow, I never hope to see one; but this I know and know full well, I'd rather see than be one." If Burges didn't write that, he has written much other good stuff, and between times he teaches the young ladies at Vassar to say, "He said to me," and "I said to him," not "He see to me," and "I see to him."

WHEN is a postmaster not a postmaster? When his appointment is said by the newspapers to be "on President Wilson's desk awaiting his signature." Joe Johnson came that near to being postmaster of New York—and then something slipped. Once New York's Fire Commissioner, he invented the now famous advice, "Look around now and choose your exit." We always have it all figured out just how we would leap from one bald head to another in case of trouble.

SO far as we are concerned, Walter Johnson might just as well pitch his games without using any ball. We never see the ball, anyway. He swings his arms, the catcher thuds his glove, and the umpire calls, "Strike two!" But if the ball passed between them you can't prove it by us. Walter's real occupation is raising stock on a ranch near Coffeyville, Kansas.

JOHN G. JOHNSON is famous for his million-dollar art collection, his taste for tea, and his refusal of $25,000 for a fifteen-minute speech. He represented the Standard Oil Company in its fight against dissolution. All writers should have chosen to be lawyers instead. When the editor—we mean the Court—rejects a lawyer's manuscripts—we mean his brief—he calls early the next morning and collects his $25,000 just the same.

"BAN" JOHNSON wrote such a good description of a lunching-bee in Kentucky that he was made sporting editor of the Cincinnati *Commercial Gazette*. Then he got into organized baseball, and became president of the American League at a salary of $25,000. But he still thinks the happy days were back at the old Ten Minute Club, made up of newspaper boys in Cincinnati. The club received its name from its only constitution and by-law: "A round of drinks every ten minutes."

TILL he was 44 years old, Hiram Johnson thought he was fated to live and die just a successful lawyer. Then the rebels against the Southern Pacific ran him for governor. Mr. Johnson got out the family flivver, took his son along as chauffeur, and when they reached a possible stumping ground the son would run ahead and ring a cow-bell to collect the crowd. Even the Southern Pacific can't fight that bell.

A FORTY-FIVE minute fight made Jack Johnson the most talked-of negro in the world: seventy-eight minutes consigned him again to obscurity. But, though he lost out in that fight with Willard, he did make $30,000 in it—exactly one thousand times what he used to make a month, before he discovered his punch.

WE shall speak very tactfully of Owen Johnson, lest he flare up, sue us for libel, and force us to print his own version of one of his stories. Owen began well with his Lawrenceville stories, sowed his wild oats in "The Salamander," and we expect his Louisa M. Alcott reformation will be announced in a new serial, "The One-Piece Suit—Read it to your daughter."

Will Some One Please See This Queen Home?

FOR the last eight years a queen has been living in America so quietly that no one knew anything about her until this summer. Now her Highness is trying to get back to her kingdom; but inasmuch as her kingdom is a bit inaccessible—lying one hundred miles southeast of the last southerly island of the jumping-off place to no-man's-seas, the Paumotu Archipelago, it is probable that another year or two will pass before a friendly "tramp" bound for those parts agrees to see her home.

Pitcairn Island, in the South Pacific, is the queen's kingdom, and her name is Emily McCoy. She came to this country to acquire knowledge, that she might take it back to her people, who have been shut off from the world for nearly a century and a half.

Emily McCoy happens to be a queen to-day because the crew of a British bark, the *Bounty*, bound from Tahiti to the British West Indies with a cargo of young breadfruit trees, mutinied on the high seas one hundred and thirty-six years ago.

The Pirate's Gentle Daughter

QUEEN EMILY is an efficient, gentle being, never more at home than when she is addressing a missionary society. Yet her genealogy began in as dirty a piece of bloodshed as ever stained the southern main.

For four days and four nights they fought aboard the *Bounty* with blunderbuss and bludgeon, belaying-pin and dirk. Only the sea-gulls heard the tumult and the cursing, but presently the thin-nosed sharks from the depths began to feast; for of the thirty-nine who had sailed from Plymouth, only eight remained. These wiped their knives, finished off the rum, and lay down to sleep. Meanwhile the sun beat down upon the *Bounty* and the tar ran in her cracks, while she drifted into strange, uncharted waters.

When they came to, the mutineers found themselves well off their course. Not that it mattered, inasmuch as they had all decided to become pirates.

This is Queen Emily, ruler over the 175 souls of Pitcairn Island in the far South Pacific. Her native costume, from the bright-colored crown of shells to the capacious reticule, was "made in Pitcairn" by her loyal subjects. During a visit to the United States she has studied nursing, medicine, dentistry, and mechanics.

It was decided, however, to put back to Tahiti first for supplies. Of course, in Tahiti, the mutineers boasted of what they had done aboard the *Bounty*. As a result, when the *Bounty* slid into the sea again, with an amazingly polyglot company aboard (the crew had been augmented by six Polynesian gentlemen and cabin conviviality enhanced by ten Polynesian half-caste ladies, not to mention two stranded and none-too-particular stewardesses from Bristol), she was quickly followed by a British armed frigate.

A friendly fog intervened for the mutineers, however, and they managed to evade the avenger and land on an island hitherto uncharted. They called the island Pitcairn, after the bo'sun.

In 1800 Pitcairn was visited by a Scotch trading vessel and its strange colony discovered.

Treachery and debauchery had filled the first years of the annals of this beautiful island. Pitcairn had been a "hell on earth," even as the *Bounty* had been a "hell on sea." The amazed captain of the Scottish bark was told by the only living member of the eight original mutineers—Alexander Smith.

To make a strange tale stranger, this Alexander Smith, it would appear, had turned from piracy to piety after the death of his comrades, and now ruled Pitcairn as a loving father, a veritable shepherd of whitewashed black sheep. The forty-one now contented inhabitants consisted of the offspring of Smith's dead companions and such Polynesians and Polynesiennes as had survived the early gory days. The two stewardesses had long since gone the way of all flesh. All were brothers and sisters in Pitcairn now. The island was the abode of peace and plenty.

Visits to Pitcairn have been few and far between, by reason of the island's isolation. When Queen Emily took the throne she determined that Pitcairn too long had been severed from mankind. So she told her subjects that she was going forth into the world to acquire knowledge, that she might bring it back to them, for their good and the good of unborn Pitcairnians. So they blessed her and she went. This was eight years ago.

No Money and No Sin in Pitcairn

"THERE is no sin in Pitcairn," says the queen, "because no one knows what sin is. The nearest approach to sin is an occasional difference of opinion among the young men; but this is always arbitrated. There is absolutely no money on Pitcairn. Indeed, our people have never even heard of it. In faith we are Seventh-Day Adventists, and there is no division of faith among us. Our school is communal, the master of each craft passing his knowledge on to the younger generation. Coffee is grown, but is not used. Tobacco is grown, but no one smokes. Liquor is unknown.

"Our homes are made from hand-hewn lumber, thatched with palm leaves. Our clothes are made from the fiber of the papa tree. Our diet consists of goat's meat, chicken, some lamb, and fish. Tropical fruits and all kinds of vegetables grow in abundance.

"Land is equally divided. As the young are married they are given their regulated tract of land, and every one lends a hand in building their house.

"Our young men and maidens come of age at seventeen, and both are then given a vote in the affairs of the island."

When Queen Emily returns to her kingdom she is going to carry back with her a phonograph, an automobile, a sewing machine, and a grand piano.

Card-Indexing My Friends

IF my friends could see themselves as they are described in the card-index file that I keep in the upper left-hand drawer of my desk—some of them would no longer be my friends; some would probably be better friends than ever; others would laugh and say, "What a waste of time!"

Those of my friends who would say, if I explained my card-index of personalities to them, "What an idle waste of time," would go down on their particular cards with an additional black mark. I would probably write in "intolerant."

Some men are blessed with a remarkable memory. I am not, and, unfortunately, I am in a position that almost demands a remarkable memory. I am in direct charge of twenty-five men, upon whose integrity I am compelled to pin a great deal of faith. I am often out of touch with them for a week at a time. Then, during my day's work my list of callers often aggregates from forty to sixty men and women, upon most of whom I must pass a hasty judgment. You can readily understand that a good memory of men would render my work much easier. On that account I resorted to my personal card-index system. It takes little of my time; it is not in the way; and it has proved inestimably valuable.

It has saved me money on more occasions than I can recall. It has prevented my hiring men whom I wouldn't trust to spade the garden. Let me show you how it works.

If you are a man or a woman who may figure in a very unimportant way in my business, I don't bother to card-index you. But if you are a person whom I know I might need—you go down in black and white; and you stay there. A year or two later your name may be brought to my attention. Instead of relying upon my unreliable memory, I pull out your card, and there you are!

I believe that every man and woman has the instinctive ability to judge with a fair degree of accuracy every other man or woman they meet. Some of us have that faculty developed to a high degree. Others have scattered energies, uniformed opinions, and their judgment is apt not to be so reliable. Snap judgment of any person will occasionally go astray. But I am convinced it will ordinarily go right if a little common sense is used.

How Do You Judge People?

HOW accurate is your judgment? Is it good or bad? But wait a minute.

Mine is pretty good, because I base it on my impression of you in an almost instantaneous glance. After that you can say what you want to. You can talk brilliantly, or you can make a fool of yourself; but my first opinion goes down on the card.

In the course of our conversation I may jot down a few inconsequential notes concerning you on a pad of scratch paper. Those notes are only a minor part of the entries that go upon the card. They are plain data: your age, if you mention it, your occupation, your education, your salary, your proposition, or whatever of importance you tell me. I will get to the other things in a moment.

Now let me give you two interesting illustrations showing how my first notation works out in practice.

A man came into my office a few months ago with an attractive business proposition. I looked him full in the face when we first shook hands, and my immediate impression was that, while he was handsome and well dressed, he was slippery, not trustworthy. I jotted that down in abbreviated form during an unwary pause in our conversation. But after I had talked with that man for half an hour he completely overwhelmed me with his dignity, his sincerity, his brilliancy.

We nearly closed a deal. For some reason I held out and told him to drop around in two weeks—to give me an opportunity to think it over. I jotted down my first impression reluctantly—it seemed so absurd. Yet he was hardly out of my office when one of my associates hurried in.

"Do you know who that man is?" he demanded in excited tones.

"Certainly," I said. "What's wrong with him?"

"He's as slippery as an eel!" exclaimed my friend. "Do you recall the Texas land grafts?"

I said I did.

"Well," he replied, "he's one of the fellows who put the graft in Texas lands."

Of course I had my caller investigated, and I found that my first impression just about fitted him—fitted him so perfectly that it seemed almost uncanny. If I had waited until the end of our conversation, Mr. J. would have been indexed: "reliable—dignified—capable—excellent conversationalist."

My First Impression Was Right

THE other illustration—and both of these, please understand, are more exaggerated than is generally the rule—was a young man who came shyly into my office, applying for a job.

I looked him over. He had clean, frank blue eyes and an agreeable although not a handsome face. Instinctively I charted him "bashful—dependable—routine worker."

Then he began to talk. I was profoundly disappointed. He spoke in sharp, staccato sentences. He blustered.

The first thing he shot at me was, "I want a job!"

My only natural reply, and in a highly sarcastic tone was, "Oh, do you!"

He rapid-fired for several minutes, and when he had finished I said simply:

"I'm sorry, but I can't use you."

He left a letter of introduction from a friend who has always amused me. The letter was in short, jabbing sentences; it characterized him completely. I ran across him a few days later at the club. He brought up the subject of the young applicant I had turned away.

"Matter with him?" he snapped.

"Charlie," I said, after a thought, "did you prime that young fellow for his interview with me?"

Charlie smiled sheepishly.

"Perhaps I did. What of it?"

"Because he left one of the worst impressions that office has ever felt. He reminded me of you, but I never thought of it."

Some time later I needed an office assistant. I thumbed through the file—the part sub-indexed "Office Applicants." I pulled out the young man's card. I read: "Bashful—dependable—routine worker." And under that: "Talked blusteringly for five minutes."

I dropped him a letter and told him there was a job open if he wanted it. Today he is my most dependable office assistant. He is still bashful, and probably always will be; but he never blusters.

The Mystery at Woodford's

By WADSWORTH CAMP

Illustration by Arthur I. Keller

MEN in plain clothes, who had evidently been scattered about the house for such an emergency, posted themselves with quiet determination before the lobby entrance and the fire exits. That sense of being trapped alarmed the spectators. They moved toward the doors, arguing with the guards, who nevertheless refused to pass any one.

Quaile hurried back. As he ran for the passage behind the boxes, he saw Josiah struggle to his feet, leaning on the back of his chair. The shawl had slipped from his shoulders, and he made marvailing and pitiful efforts to get it once more in place. The derision had left his glance.

"Watson! Watson!" he whimpered.

Joyce and Robert, breathing hard, came up, and Quaile went through the passage with them. The curtain was rattling down when they reached the stage. Dolly's eyes no longer sought for the cat: they were turned to Wilkins.

"What is it?" she kept asking. "What is it?"

Wilkins had relaxed. An odd smile twisted his features. He muttered to Dolly:

"God bless McHugh. He's got away with it."

Only Barbara disclosed no relief in the new situation. She looked at the jagged rent in the scenery above the mantel which McHugh's hand had torn. It was like an open wound. Through it Quaile dimly saw figures moving, heard suppressed, incredulous argument.

He ran into the wings. The others followed, but Quaile noticed that Barbara's foot dragged.

The sight of plain-clothes policemen confused him at first. He couldn't see who it was they held. Then, as Joyce and Robert came up, the group parted, and in fell back before a wrinkled face, scarred by fear. Involuntarily he cried out:

"Mike!"

McHugh stood close by, grinning happily, making ridiculous efforts to rearrange his torn collar.

"It's in his right-hand coat pocket," he was saying. "Good thing you didn't let him grab it out, or there'd have been more ghosts around here than Joyce and his whole darned society could have laid. Easy with it. Don't touch the stopper; don't press the bulb."

ONE of the detectives had drawn from Mike's pocket a cheap atomizer. The end of the spray was closed. The physician who had examined Wilkins the night before stepped from the fringe of the crowd and took the contrivance. The detective protested.

"That's all right," McHugh said. "You hustle it to headquarters, and take the doctor with you. We've got some ideas about that, haven't we, doc? We want 'em proved."

The doctor nodded. He left with one of the detectives, who carried the atomizer as if it held something infinitely precious.

"What's it mean, McHugh?" Quaile asked. "Mike—"

Robert stepped closer.

"Yes. What's the old man done? Why is he held?"

McHugh winked.

"Just so he won't break any bones trying to run too fast."

"It was all a trick, then? But have you any evidence against this man?"

"Evidence!" McHugh jeered, turning to Mike. "I've so much evidence against you, Mike, that I promise within two months to see you twisting in the electric chair for Carlton's death."

Barbara cried out, but her voice was drowned by Mike's raucous scream. He controlled the trembling of his lips. The incoherent sound turned into words, throaty but intelligible:

"You sha'n't, Mr. McHugh! You haven't the heart! I'll talk. I only did as I was made—and I didn't know, I didn't know! If anybody goes to the chair, it ought to be him."

He couldn't point because of the detaining hands; but Quaile and the rest turned, following the direction of his ascending glance. And at first Quaile didn't believe, fancying that Mike groped for any chance, however absurd, to shift attention from himself. For his eyes flashed fear and hatred at Robert Bunce.

"That's what I was after!" McHugh cried. "Grab that man!"

But Robert had taken advantage of their momentary amazement. He had slipped some distance toward the rear. At McHugh's shout, he turned and ran past Barbara. Flinging his hands above his head in a gesture of despair, he stumbled into the narrow space between the scenery and the house-wall.

"Across the stage!" McHugh roared. "Head him off!"

Quaile had already started for the back. As he reached Barbara, she touched his arm—not detainingly; rather, as if to urge him on.

"He mustn't talk," she whispered.

Quaile entered the narrow space in time to see Robert dashing out at the other end. The man held something in his right hand. Quaile shuddered and stopped, bracing himself for the shock. It came a moment later—above the shouts and the noisy pursuit: one sharp explosion, a cry, then a sudden hush.

He went slowly back to Barbara. She had straightened. She seemed to listen still.

"You heard?" he asked.

She nodded.

"A—a shot."

The color rushed back to her cheeks.

"Probably the final tragedy," Quaile said.

"You mean—Robert Bunce," she breathed.

"Yes; I think, when he found the alley guarded— Perhaps, though—"

THE black-robed maid came from the stage and glided up to them. Barbara's eyes were bright with the question she didn't dare ask. But the maid understood. For the first time, Quaile saw her features quicken into positive expression; they expressed a definite satisfaction.

"He is dead," she murmured. "You must come with me now."

"Gone!" Barbara whispered.

Her eyes filled with tears.

"I can't help it. It is terrible, but I am not sorry."

A sound of tapping came from the stage.

"Get her away," Quaile warned the maid.

The tapping continued.

"And I will come to you later," he

"'I remember you,' the old man quavered; 'you were Woodford's right bower, weren't you? Police got you, eh?' With increasing anger he shook his cane at Mike. 'It's you that's finished this house!'"

The serial began in the issue of May 27, 1916.

said to Barbara. "I may come now?"

"You have to know," she answered.

She glanced up.

"What is that tapping?"

"Take her to her dressing-room," Quaile directed the maid.

The woman led Barbara back of the scenery to the circular staircase.

THE tapping sounded just beyond the canvas. The set door shook from a hand on the knob. Mike looked up.

"What you waiting for?" he complained to the detectives. "You've got to look me up. I don't want to see him."

Watson's voice came from behind the door:

"But, Mr. Josiah, the people are all in the alley."

The set door opened. A cane waved in the aperture. Josiah appeared and shuffled toward Mike. If he had heard the shot at all, its significance had escaped him.

"I remember you," the old man quavered. "We've all grown old since those days—I never realized how old until I came here to-night. You were a fine boy then—Woodford's right bower, weren't you? Needn't look away from me. Police got you, eh? It's you that's been playing tricks with my property!"

"Don't, Mr. Josiah," Mike began.

Quaile stepped back, relieved to see McHugh stalk through the doorway. The manager was visibly shaken by what he had witnessed in the alley. Josiah didn't turn. With an increasing anger he shook his cane at Mike.

"It's you that's finished this house for theatrical purposes! And I liked it. Mr. McHugh would have made it popular again. Now I'll have to sell it, after all."

McHugh went to him. He didn't meet his glance.

"It's too late, Bunce," he said in an undertone.

"What do you mean?" Josiah whined.

"I mean, if you'd agreed to sell a month ago this would never have happened."

The words to Quaile were stimulating. To an extent they suggested an explanation. But they meant nothing to Illuminating to Josiah. With an amiable smile, he offered McHugh his hand.

"Anyway, you were honest, weren't you?"

McHugh grasped the knotted fingers.

"Why do you shake hands so hard?" Josiah said. "That hurts. I want to know why I shouldn't agree to sell now. Robert's been after me the last two months to sign a deed for this property."

McHugh's voice was husky:

"I mean, your brother won't ask you any more. He won't trouble you, or any of us, again."

Josiah withdrew his fingers.

"You're hurting my hand, Mr. McHugh!"

He leaned heavily on his cane. His hands shook.

"Better sit down," McHugh said gruffly. He brought a chair; Josiah sank into it.

"I'll rest a minute," he whimpered, "before I go back where I belong. I always told Robert he'd get in too deep."

He glanced up, as one who seeks justification.

"And he always said I was a miserable skinflint who deserved to die poor."

"Stay with him, Watson," McHugh directed. "If you need me, I'll be on the other side of the stage. You cops bring the prisoner along."

AS they crossed the stage, in reply to Quaile's questions the manager muttered:

"I've found out Robert's been spending for years. He'd been eaten alive by war stocks—played 'em the wrong way from start to finish. Borrowed from his firm and doctored the books. Facing jail, and everything gone except his share in this property—worth half a million or more for building purposes."

Quaile whistled.

"Yep. Couldn't realize on it without Josiah's signature. I gather he'd just about got that, when along I came with the scheme for this revival, and spilled the beans."

"I see. Of course, he had to get you out—scare you off. And the superstitious stories about this place ariel out the simple way."

McHugh nodded at Mike.

"And there was his old worshiper, knowing every angle of the building, remembering every quirk of Woodford's habits. It ought to have been the cinch he expected. It would have been, with most people; but I've worked like a dog on the case, and I've had to go on tiptoe all the way. I'll tell you about that later."

He stopped in front of the door of Woodford's dressing-room. He beckoned Joyce, who stood by the alley entrance.

"I'd like to show Quaile and you some ghosts," he said. "Haven't had a chance to see 'em myself yet."

He turned to Mike.

"They're going to give you a free ride to the lock-up in a minute. You're all the law has to feed on, and it has a high old appetite. But there are some things you might tell that would make me want to help you—for instance, the combination in there."

He indicated the door with its faded gilt star. Mike compressed his lips.

"All right, Mr. McHugh. I'll trust you. I'll tell you anything I can. Pull down on the first hook on the left-hand side of the closet."

"Well, that's one thing I want to know, and you can pass me the booby prize on that. As simple as daylight."

"Mr. Woodford never made any great secret of it, sir."

McHugh opened the door.

"You and Joyce go on in, Quaile, and light up while I talk to Mike about some other things before the boys take him away."

Quaile entered and snapped the electric button.

"I don't see yet, Joyce," he said, "exactly how you figure in the affair."

Joyce chuckled.

"Please don't embarrass me."

HE was obviously relieved when McHugh walked in and took from his coat a flashlight similar to the one he had bought for Quaile. He pressed the control and stepped into the closet—an exceptionally large one, formed by a partition running the width of the room. Neither it nor the room offered any probability of a secret compartment.

"You see," McHugh apologized, "we had never used this room before last night. Naturally, I'd looked it over, but it seemed to hide nothing. I searched a lot more carefully in the fly galleries and the cellar. Even after Barbara's scare, I couldn't find the way in. Didn't look for any trick so simple. As Mike says, Woodford probably made no great secret of it. When he grew older he wanted a place where he could get away from people and rest entirely undisturbed. Of course Mike knew about it."

He grasped the hook and pulled down. A latch clicked. The entire end of the closet opened outward—to all appearances an ordinary door.

From the darkness beyond came a stealthy stirring.

McHugh went through, flashing his light on the floor and the walls. Quaile followed. The plan of the hidden room disclosed itself to his first glance. Scarcely more than four feet wide, it ran the length of the dressing-room, and lay between that and the passage. The plaster had fallen from the walls, exposing bricks and laths. It lay with the long accumulation of dust thickly over the floor and on the single piece of furniture—a skeleton of a sofa, from about which the upholstery and the wood had decayed. At the foot of this wreck crouched the thing that had stirred. Two tiny gleaming circles flashed back the light. The lithe body was ready to spring.

"Look out, McHugh!" Quaile cried. "It's the cat!"

McHugh moved to one side as the animal streaked by. It tore past Quaile and Joyce, through the closet, and into the dressing-room, where it scratched fiercely at the outer door. Quaile experienced an odd repulsion. The cat's anger, its eagerness for escape, were silent save for the fury of its claws.

"It would be a useful ghost of Woodford's cat if it had a voice," McHugh said dryly. "I've tried to impress on you that Robert played for about the highest stakes there are—respectability and wealth against utter damnation sordidly and financially. What's a cat or two where half a million's concerned?"

"The ghost!" Quaile reminded him.

"Sure," McHugh grinned. "Joyce, shut the closet door."

Joyce obeyed.

"I'm much more comfortable," he said, "with that voiceless animal locked out."

McHugh snapped off the light.

"What's that for?" Quaile asked.

McHugh's exclamation was annoyed. Then his voice came from close to the floor:

"If I were on the force I'd ask them to transfer me to Canarsie! I've forgotten my alphabet. Of course. It was under the sofa all the time. Head down here. Maybe you'd better not, Joyce. Might turn you sour on your spook science."

Quaile stooped. He peered beneath the decayed piece of furniture. At once he became aware of light—a pallid, mysterious radiance that carried his mind back to the night of his vigil. The limit of its activity was a narrow circle which quivered with an odd illusion of life.

"Cold white flame—phosphorus!" McHugh murmured.

His flashlight clicked; the room was bright again. Quaile reached for a small round tin can that rested close to the wall beneath the sofa. But McHugh shook his head. A serious expression had driven the satisfaction from his face.

"Don't bother. That little ghost can't show you any more than it has. It was logic we would find it here. There are things of greater importance for you, Quaile."

He arose, and motioned Joyce to leave. He hung back for a moment with Quaile. His tone, for him, was very gentle.

"I hate to speak of it, my boy. But you're not blind. Since we've been in this room I bet you've been thinking what I have."

Quaile glanced away.

"I know what you're driving at."

"Barbara," McHugh said, "evidently knew the combination. She used it last night and opened the door. You've seen how wild Mike's cat is. She must have been scratched looking it up again, and she lied to us about the footsteps to throw us off the track. Maybe she only entered out of curiosity. I don't know about Barbara."

QUAILE had no answer. The picture of her secreted at the Bunces' was still lively in his mind. Those two incidents furnished staggering proof that she, as well as Mike, had been in Robert's confidence. Yet, Quaile was sure, if she had been an accomplice, something more powerful than greed or disposition had been responsible. He would admit nothing until he had seen her.

"McHugh," he urged, "no matter what you know, no matter what you think, keep your hands off until I've talked to her. She's promised to tell me. I'm going there now. I've tried to do what you wished, and you let me work in the dark. Now I ask you this. Promise."

"I know how you feel, Quaile," the manager answered. "Go see her. I don't want to be hard. I'll run up myself as soon as I've taken care of Josiah. Old bird's harder bit than I thought he'd be."

He walked through and opened the outer door. The cat slipped out, and was lost in the shadows of the alley.

McHugh returned to Josiah. Quaile followed uncertainly. Barbara, he learned, had left again with a haste suggestive of flight, a cloak thrown over her costume, accompanied by the silent maid. What was there that drew her so quickly home? Quaile knew the answer must lie in that room in her apartment from which the cry and the echo had issued.

He hurried from the theater and drove to Barbara's apartment. The silent maid answered his ring. Quaile walked past her into the living-room. Barbara waited there by the window. It impressed him that some of the fear had left her face; but her eyes were very sad, her gesture of welcome mechanical. He controlled his eagerness. He held her hand for only a moment. He lost no time in putting her on her guard, glancing uneasily toward the door to the bedroom.

"In a few minutes," he said, "McHugh is coming here. You need tell me only what is necessary for your protection. Of course, he has guessed you knew of Woodford's secret room. He realizes you didn't tell us quite the truth last night. Understand—as far as I am concerned, I ask nothing. I trust you, as I promised."

She stretched out her hands impulsively, but as he tried to clasp them she drew her fingers away. Her voice was wistful.

"I must tell you first. Perhaps then you won't care—" She shook her head before his incredulous smile.

"I don't know what Mr. McHugh may do, but I have suffered enough. It's worth it to realize your faith, and last night you were right to make me go in. I was unjust, but I was at my wits' end. You'll understand that in a minute."

She sighed.

"You are looking at the door. You are thinking of the scream."

SHE walked over and opened the door. Beyond her shoulder the confusion of the room suggested a recent occupancy; but there was none of the paraphernalia of illness, possibly of insanity, which he had foreseen.

"Whoever it was," he said, "has left?"

She nodded.

"Just now—as soon as she knew Robert Bunce was dead. She didn't dare until then. It was my sister—my older sister."

He took her hand and led her to the divan. He sat beside her; but he didn't speak at first, for in her averted eyes he read a little of the truth. At last he said gently:

"Then she really was involved with Robert's attempt?"

Barbara indicated the telephone.

"Through that—through those calls."

"How?"

"It was her position that suggested it to him. Listen. It is hard to make her confession. She—she was working for the telephone company, fighting her own fight and winning it, when he made her help him."

"I can guess," he said softly.

She placed her hand on his arm.

"You mustn't guess too much, for it wasn't really her fault that he could make her do that. It happened six years ago, when I was abroad at school. My mother and she lived in town, so that I didn't know Robert Bunce, didn't see him—until yesterday. There was an elopement—a marriage, but an illegal one. She left him as soon as she found that out. She wouldn't have my help, or any one's. She got this position and worked year after year until they made her an exchange manager. Then suddenly, one day, he appeared and threatened her. She saw all she had done crumbling. At first she refused; then he explained it was only a joke on Mr. McHugh that he was playing—and again he threatened. She had so much to lose. So she made the calls and kept them secret. It was Mike, with his perfect knowledge of Woodford's voice, who did the talking. It was wrong, but it seemed easier than to give up everything—to face the scandal he would have raised in the company. And that far I agreed with her. She never dreamed. Then Mr. Carlton died."

Quaile looked at her with a great pity.

"I see. She had placed herself beyond the law—probably accessory to a murder."

"And she swore," Barbara cried out, "that she would kill herself if I told. The horror of it grew—grew. She came in that night after Dolly had left. She heard what you said to me—all that you said. It seemed to her that she had finished my happiness too. It swept her off her feet. For a moment she was hysterical, and you see now I had to keep you quiet. But I thought I couldn't stand any more. I

around until the effect of the stuff had worn off. And it nearly worked. If I hadn't been able to go to Wilkins and tell him what we were up against, there would have been no revival of 'Coward's Farce.' He'd had about enough.

"YOU remember, Quaile, I took the doctor home from your place last night. He was all worked up over the case. He was stumped by Wilkins' reactions, as he insisted on calling them. When I told him about the affair in the cab and Carlton's death, and all I knew and suspected, he got an idea. You see, it's his business to have ideas about drugs. He took me into his library and went through a lot of murderous books. Say, I never knew there was so much learning in the world. Finally he put his fingers together and said it might be hydrocyanic acid. He doped out a theory that the analysis has verified."

"That's dangerous and powerful stuff, isn't it?" Quaile asked.

"So powerful," McHugh answered, "that as much as you could put on a pinhead would knock a man over like a fifteen-inch shell."

Quaile sprang up excitedly.

"I begin to see. It wasn't swallowed."

"Of course it wasn't swallowed," McHugh said. "The book says the stuff is a highly volatile liquid which gives rise to vertigo if inhaled in minute quantities. It's one of the most rapid and deadly poisons known, if not the worst."

"Hasn't it an odor?" Quaile asked.

McHugh laughed.

"Sure. The doc and I hit on that, but, as the book told us, it is very volatile. I expect you're going to ask me what that means. What I get is that it means the smell evaporates very rapidly in any open space—"

He looked up.

"Like a stage, for instance. Besides, it seems it can be modified by alcohol. But this is the real point. The doc hit the ceiling when I told him about the perfumes you and Dolly had been sniffing about the stage. He dug in the books again, and told me about a thing called oil of benzaldehyde. It's full of hydrocyanic acid. When the acid is removed the oil is sold as the basis of a perfume, and it used to be a popular one. He found a lot of instances of poisoning from this perfume, and proved that they were all due to traces of acid remaining in the oil. That settled the whole business. All they had to do was to put a tiny quantity of that deadly acid in the perfume—what they figured would put a man out, sprayed as Mike did it, directly in Carlton's and Wilkins' nostrils when they stood by the mantel, lifting the candlestick. Talk about a sledge-hammer! That was it—applied to the base of the brain. The only good thing to be said for the acid is that its effects pass off very quickly, provided it doesn't instantly kill. I'd never have forgiven myself if Wilkins had got an overdose last night. As I say, I don't believe they intended to kill Carlton. He was probably in worse shape physically than we thought, or else they gave him a little too much, or else he breathed it deeper.

"So I knew exactly what to expect tonight. I was sure that Mike had the atomizer in his pocket, and without taking it out had lifted the nozzle to a hole in the scenery; but I couldn't find that hole until I had you hold the candle flame directly in front of the mantel. Then I found it. He had pasted brown paper across, so that you had to get a light close up to it to tell the difference from the canvas. After the third act had commenced, when I knew it would be too late for him to investigate, I went down to the cellar and dished his wire for him. He wasn't going to cover himself with darkness to-night. Of course, I had to wait again until the last minute; but I knew the light would last, and I didn't see how he could destroy the evidence. So, as soon as Wilkins started that fatal line, I grabbed Mike. But of course he had his coat up to the scenery, and I knew the spray was in the hole. I couldn't take chances of his pressing the bulb, so I shoved Wilkins away. Didn't want him to go through that experience again."

QUAILE'S laugh was a trifle resentful.

"You're clever. I guessed you had told Wilkins all you knew."

McHugh arose. He glanced at Barbara.

"If I didn't trust you more, young man, it was because of this young lady. I guessed if you were any good at all you'd come to her with all you knew."

"So I would have," Quaile confessed. "So I did."

McHugh grunted. He took Barbara's hand. His voice trailed into a sigh.

"I'll dance at your wedding, my dear; and I suppose that means you are leaving the stage."

"You'll do more than that," Quaile said. "As an extra humiliation you'll be best man. It will remind you that, although you're a great detective, you do make mistakes."

McHugh grinned.

"Anyway, that won't prevent my kissing the bride."

He grasped her shoulders and touched his lips to her forehead. There was something pathetically paternal about the caress. Quaile suspected moisture in the narrow eyes.

He waved to them and slipped out. The door clicked behind him. They faced each other alone in this room, as they had done the other night. Only now Barbara's cheeks showed no pallor, and, if she shrank away, it was with a different fear. When he followed, her resistance possessed an unconscious witchery.

There was no longer any point in resisting. The room was very quiet. The maid stole in with his hat and coat. There was some difficulty about her expression.

The End

Girl To-Let

Photograph from Mary H. Southard

ON Miss Billie Burke's house is the sign: "This estate is not for sale."

And all the people who see it, even though they have no thought of buying, are amused, ask whom it belongs to, and end up by vowing they must see Miss Burke next time her play comes to town.

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